

**“Life on the Front Line”**  
**School Health Centers (SHC) –Fair Haven School**  
**New Haven Public Schools**

February 17, 2016

My name is Tammy Edelkind. I’m a Nurse Practitioner/APRN and work at a School Health Center in the New Haven Public School District. I’m submitting the following written testimony **in opposition of Bill HB 5044.**

I have worked in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Yale for over 30 years, before becoming the APRN at Fair Haven K-8 in New Haven. Co-workers from Yale said that I would be bored. I was worried. Little did I know the complexity of a School Health Center. No, I am not bored.

Many things that I do are routine, from immunizations, checking throats and ears, to doing new student physicals, and hundreds of flu vaccines. However, the complications come with the clientele I serve. I never know from what country children are coming from and what language they speak. I can get children from China, Thailand, Korea, Germany, Japan, Africa, Afghanistan, Syria, Egypt, as well as all the South American Countries. I have learned, with my amazing school RN Veronica, how to interpret vaccinations in different languages, as well as calling the Center for Disease Control for help.

I never know what will walk through the door on any given day: asthma exacerbations, seizures, giving medications through ports for hemophiliacs, seizure care, or broken bones. I hate rashes.

The trick of school based health is giving care without parents there, and the difficulty in getting them on the phone.

Many of our children are undocumented. It then becomes a challenge to find them appropriate medical care, medications, and other services without insurance.

A young adolescent came from Portugal last year. She has had a major seizure disorder since she was 3 years old. Her parents and brother came to New Haven to get her good medical care. The challenges started when the pediatric neurology department would not accept her as a patient, they didn’t have enough money for medication, and she had to start school. I called every person who would listen to get her free care at Yale, needing paperwork upon paperwork, phone calls that weren’t returned, and emails not answered. Finally, 6 months after starting, she got free care. I also arranged to get free medication from one of the drug companies, which needs to be renewed every 3 months, needing more paperwork. This has been very challenging, calling her parents frequently with the interpreter line. I am not sure where her neurological status will end up, but she is in school every day, and going to high school next year.

The SHC social worker, Robin is one of the smartest, most reliable, and effective social workers I have ever met. The children line up every day, wanting to know when Miss Robin is coming in. The teachers do as well. Recently, we worked together for a little boy who is in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, whose parents are not involved, and is being raised by a grandmother who is overwhelmed. He was toilet trained by the SHC staff and by Veronica, who monitored his medications, since his grandmother did not give them. He is an angry little boy. Recently, he started wheezing in school. Not usually hard to take care of, but his grandmother wouldn’t answer any note, and none of the addresses or phone numbers worked. We cared for him, monitored his breathing, and tried reaching his Primary Care Physician, who couldn’t care for him, as no one could bring him in, and he hadn’t been there in 2 years. After 1-2 weeks, the grandmother finally came in, the assistant principal, teacher, SHC staff and nurse made a treatment plan with her. He now has medication, he will be getting a primary care appointment, and he has not missed school.

Even though the SHC staff and school nurse are all employed by different agencies, we work together for the good of the children, and the school FHK8 that we love so much.

Please don’t cut funding for SHCs. We actually save money in the long run. Kids come here and depend on us for care by people they know and trust, instead of going to the Emergency Department. Parents don’t miss work, and children don’t miss school. It is an amazing place.

Come visit and see for yourself-you are always welcome.

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